

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This is a reply to the Office Action dated October 2, 2006.

Claims 1-3 and 5-13 remain in this application. Claim 4 has been canceled. Claims 1-3 and 5-11 are presently amended. Claims 12-13 have been added.

Claims 1, 7 and 10 have been amended to clarify that the "polymer fibers" are synthetic type (e.g., page 3, lines 26-29), or, as applicable, the natural fibers are cellulosic type (page 4, lines 11, 18). The above new claim 12 is fully supported by the specification (e.g., see page 5, lines 16-20; Fig. 1, features 23, 24), and reference is made thereto. The above new claim 13 is fully supported by the specification (e.g., see page 5, lines 24-26), and reference is made thereto.

In the most recent Office Action, claims 1-3, 6, and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Oathout (USP 5,459,912) in view of Bahten (USP 6,182,323).

The present invention concerns nonwoven wipe constructs suitable for use in clean room applications, such as are employed in the manufacture of microelectronic components and devices. In such an environment, the provision of wipes exhibiting low sodium *and* low linting characteristics is extremely important.

Oathout may describe patterned spunlaced fabrics containing a polymeric staple fiber layer and a natural fiber layer that are hydroentangled, but fails to disclose any sodium ion content thereof, nor an acetic acid/de-ionized water washing step used to reduce sodium ion content thereof. Oathout fails to appreciate the problem solved by the present invention, much less take any measure(s) to address it.

Based on Applicant's review, the newly relied upon secondary reference of Bahten appears to be unrelated to the present invention. Bahten discloses providing a scrubbing brush for the manufacture of substrates for the electronic industry in which a foam or sponge member is processed to reduce its calcium concentration to less than about 1 part per million (see, e.g., abstract; col. 2, lines 16-17, 23-26, 33-38; col. 3, lines 15-16; col. 4, lines 24-26; col. 7, lines 9-13; col. 8, lines 24-25; col. 9, lines 44-45; col. 15, lines 24-25). As can be appreciated, the foam and sponge members that are processed by Bahten are high porosity shape-retaining, non-draping structures consistent with such materials (col. 3, lines 15-25, 44-60; Fig.'s 1A-1C).

The presently claimed invention concerns nonwoven fabrics, not foam and sponge members. Moreover, the primary reference to Oathout concerns patterned spunlaced fabrics

containing woodpulp, not foam and sponge members. Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not consider combining these two references to get the presently claimed invention.

The most recent Office Action does not explain why and how one of ordinary skill in the art might have considered the foam and sponge member treatments as described by Bahten, to be relevant or applicable to fabrics such as described by Oathout. These are entirely different classes of materials. Bahten does not indicate the process described therein has application to fabrics, nor how it would be applied in that different technology.

Moreover, Bahten teaches away from present invention by requiring an elaborate multi-step treatment process including caustic washes and chelation washes, etc. (see, e.g., col. 7, lines 5-65; col. 9, lines 1-20). In the present invention, very low sodium ion impurity levels can be achieved in a nonwoven with a single acetic acid wash and single rinse wash (see instant Fig. 1, acid wash 23, rinse wash 24), which is a much simpler scheme than required by Bahten.

The Office Action also references the mentioning of citric acid by Bahten, which also mentions the mineral acids hydrochloric acid and sulfuric acid (col. 11, lines 9-11). However, citric acid is not acetic acid, nor does Bahten or some other relied upon reference in the rejection, suggest they are fungible and equivalents for one another in washing foams, sponges, or nonwovens for that matter.

In view of at least the above, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 5, 6, 7-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Oathout in view of Bahten, as applied to claims 1-3, 6 and 11, and further in view of Palm et al. (USP 5,776,353).

Based on Applicant's review Palm et al. disclose acid washing of composite filtration media comprising heterogeneous media particles, viz., diatomite and expanded perlite, and not wood pulp fibers such required by Oathout. The present claims recite synthetic and/or cellulosic fibers, not inorganic particles.

Palm et al. describe agglomerates comprising inorganic functional filtration components, such as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, and matrix components (co. 5, lines 4-10). The matrix components may be glass, thermoplastic, thermoset, etc., but are not in fiber form in the filtration media, much less nonwoven form (e.g., see col. 8, line 16 *et seq.*) Palm et al. appears to be unrelated to the claimed invention.

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Amendment - After Non-Final Rejection
Reply to Office Action dated October 2, 2006

Given the significant divergence in technological arts between Palm et al. and Oathout, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have been motivated to incorporate acid washing processes described only for inorganic particle-based filtration media per Palm et al. in woodpulp fabrics according to Oathout. Nor is there any suggestion that acetic acid in particular should be selected from amongst the numerous listed acids by Palm et al. Further, there is no reasonable expectation of success obtained from the relied upon prior art that Palm et al.'s acid washing might work on woodpulp fabrics per Oathout.

In view of at least the above, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

It is believed that this application is in condition for allowance, and notice of such is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes that a teleconference would be useful in expediting the prosecution of this application, the official is kindly invited to contact Applicant's undersigned representative of record.

Respectfully submitted,

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